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## POPULISM IN A STATE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION, THE KANSAS STATE AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE.

REQUESTED to give the story of a raid of partisanship upon the Kansas State Agricultural College, I shrink from the task for several reasons. I dislike the appearance of a personal plea, such as any one suffering in the attack must seem to be making; I recognize the danger of biased testimony from lifelong interest in the institution as it was, while the necessary statement of facts in the upbuilding of the college may be taken for self praise; and I still retain such an interest in the college and some of its faculty as to desire in no way to injure its future. Yet, so evident is the danger to all state educational institutions that I must accept the necessity, and I do it with greater ease in that I may help fair-minded men to do justice to my past associates who have been publicly traduced.

The Kansas State Agricultural College at Manhattan was organized and maintained under the land grant act of 1862, according to which, "the leading object shall be, without excluding, etc., to teach such branches of learning as are related to agriculture and the mechanic arts, in such manner as the legislatures of the states may respectively prescribe, in order to promote the liberal and practical education of the industrial classes in the several pursuits and professions of life." In 1879, after fifteen years of experience in the Michigan State Agricultural College, I took up the work of developing the Kansas college to the ideal of a college of industries for the people, and with such success as to win confidence in both the ideal and the methods from the mass of the people and the majority of educators. The college had grown from being one of the smallest to the largest of its kind. Its financial management was accepted by every state administration as without question. It was visited by experts from all over the United States, and

many of the younger institutions of the West were purposely modeled after it in general course of study and adaptation to the preparation given in common schools. The four years' course, leading to the degree, Bachelor of Science, was thoroughly disciplinary in matter and methods, but at the same time so combined with training of hands and stimulating of purpose, as to lead evidently into the industries. Agriculture and horticulture in all their bearing had chief place, as was proper in an agricultural state, while mechanics had recently grown to a rank but little lower. For special preparation of teachers, investigators and expert workmen, postgraduate courses adapted to the special needs of each were devised.

Nearly seven hundred undergraduates were in this single course and more than forty graduates, several from university courses, were taking special training. These represented seventy-six counties of the state and 70 per cent. were from farm homes. Attendance was growing at the rate of 13 per cent. per annum. Graduates took highest rank as students in university courses at Ann Arbor, Cornell, Chicago and elsewhere, and as teachers and investigators all over the Union. Its plan of organization was published with approval in the proceedings of the National Educational Council, and its officers held highest places in the Association of American Agricultural Colleges and Experiment Stations. Its station work was commended by the best experts for purpose and accuracy. The form of its bulletin, adopted in 1890 was in 1897 commended by a special committee for all the stations of the Union. Adverse criticisms came only from boomers of special enterprises or from agricultural editors who mistook the station for a bureau of miscellaneous information in agriculture.

The faculty of twenty-four teachers and sixteen assistants, foreman and minor officers, had been selected because of special aptness for their positions as instructors in such a school. They were in thorough sympathy with the ideal of the college as related to agriculture and mechanic arts and more than one-half of the twenty-four teachers had been identified with its upbuild-

ing for from ten to twenty years. The few who were not specialists had been chosen for their success as teachers in the best schools of the state. All temptation to ape university requirements was met by the knowledge that the state university held its own place and rank at Lawrence. This was the College of Agriculture and the Mechanic Arts.

The equipment in library, museums, laboratories, shops, and plantations was inventoried at \$415,000, though still behind the plans already approved by regents and legislature. It was the admiration of educators for economical adaptation to purpose, and for scientific quality.

Such was the institution which party politicians sought to capture for a school of socialism. The attack began with the victory of the people's party in 1892, which gave to that party four of the seven regents in 1893, six in 1894, and by accident of the legislature meeting a week before the inauguration of a republican governor in 1895, continued their majority to April 1896, and their representation by two members to April 1897. Immediately after the election of 1892, Hon. Harrison Kelley, who had left the republican party upon expiration of his term as congressman in 1891, attacked the state institutions of learning through the press as neglecting entirely political economy in their courses of study. Upon his appointment as a regent of the State Agricultural College he made the same charge in board meeting, and insisted that lectures be introduced, to continue through the course, in addition to the full term's work always required in the senior year. The first series of lectures in the fall of 1892 was given by representatives of various political parties selected by unanimous consent of a committee of three; but as these were "not well attended by students," it was resolved "That the course be discontinued for the present with a view to establishing at some future time a lectureship on economic topics." In April 1894, Mr. C. B. Hoffman, who had long been prominent in socialistic agitation, as well as for connection with the notorious community attempted at Topolobampo, Mexico, became a regent and an ardent supporter of

Regent Kelley in his plans for teaching "the new school of political economy." In a lengthy resolution offered by Mr. Hoffman, the board ordered in place of the established Friday lectures by members of the faculty in rotation, the introduction of thirteen lectures on political economy to "treat of the subject consecutively, commencing with the primary concepts of the science." "The principles maintained by the advocates of land nationalization, public control of public utilities, and the reform of the financial and monetary system shall be fairly stated and candidly examined, with a view of leading the student to grasp the principles involved in the science of production and distribution without bias or prejudice." This resolution was adopted after much debate in caucus over a proposition to reorganize the college upon the basis of the "new school of political economy" with the *Industrialist*, the weekly paper published by the faculty, as an advocate.

In June 1894, the president and faculty were directed to so rearrange duties and positions as to fill the position of the professor of physics, who had been granted leave of absence, "and leave vacant instead some full chair which shall include political economy." This took from my duties the teaching of political economy, in which I had taken pride as a teacher because of utmost freedom of discussion from all points of view, though my personal opinions did not accord with those of the board. At the same time the committee on employés was authorized to open correspondence "for the purpose of securing a competent professor to fill the chair of political economy." Regent Hoffman undertook the correspondence, and at the suggestion of Mr. B. O. Flower, then editor of the *Arena*, invited Professor T. E. Will to meet the board in July at the expense of the college. Professor Will was a Harvard graduate, who after two years of experience in college work at Appleton, Wis., had lost his place, and was lecturing as opportunity offered in Boston upon social and economic questions.

Professor Will was installed in September, 1894, to teach political economy in the course, including the thirteen lectures

already provided for, and to do such other teaching as should not interfere with the regular duties of his chair. His lectures were received without opposition, although they were evidently contrived to give the sharpest criticism to certain accepted views and to present others of socialistic tendency, as if they were beyond criticism. It was also noticeable that statements of doubtful authority, newspaper clippings and the like, were sometimes made the basis of reasoning, though more often of innuendo. The lectures occasioned more friction when the lecturer, having charge of classes in rhetorical work, required reports of these lectures as exercises. The republican press of the state assumed Professor Will to be the exponent of the views of a populist board, and so referred to him. The board fostered this view by giving to the biennial report of that year a partisan bias in mentioning the extension of economic science. A decrease of thirty in attendance is said to be "due to the prevailing financial depression caused by the policy of dominant political parties." A further quotation will better show the exact disposition of the board, or rather of the committee, Regents Kelley and Hoffman, who prepared the report.

"Your board of regents, in coming in contact with the sons and daughters of the farmers of the state, who constitute a large portion of the students, have realized more than ever, that it is not a lack of industry or unfavorable methods of farming or the unfavorableness of climate, which have caused the widespread and steadily increasing poverty among the agricultural and laboring classes. The unremitting toil of the farmer in which sons and daughters take part even during childhood, has indeed yielded him large quantities of grain, great numbers of cattle, hogs, horses, and other domestic animals. He has produced enough of the useful and necessary things of life that with fair, equitable exchange would bring prosperity in place of poverty, comfort in place of humiliating drudgery, and content and patriotism in place of unrest and dissatisfaction.

"It is hoped that giving more attention to the study of economic principles which govern the distribution of wealth will

stimulate a healthy inquiry among the people into the causes that depress industry and paralyze agriculture. With this purpose in view, the board of regents has instituted the general course of lectures on political economy, already referred to, and has ranked the study of political economy in the postgraduate course, commensurate with its importance."

No further steps were taken during the winter, except to secure the confirmation of regents by a populist senate before the inauguration of a republican governor; but in April 1895, the faculty was directed by resolution of the same regents to submit a plan for so changing the course of study as to "give not less than six terms" study of economic sciences, including one term of history, one term of civics, and one term of psychology." The faculty made a full and clear statement of the difficulties, claiming that the course was already full; that to crowd so short a course with additional terms in these studies by excluding others or by electives would reduce the effectiveness of the course for its prime purposes; and therefore urged a compromise by offering a course of five years with electives in the last two. This plan, after some hesitation, was accepted by the board; but the movers of the resolution and Professor Will, were much disappointed and held the older members of the faculty responsible for their failure.

April 1896, brought a republican majority on the board of regents, but no change was made in the course in political economy, except to restore the chapel lectures by members of the faculty in rotation, which had been displaced for the lectures in economics. The committee on employes, of which Mr. Hoffman was still a member, recommended and the board agreed, that no change be made in the list of employes for the college year ending September 1, 1897.

In all the three years of control by a board of populists, very little criticism of teachers or of methods had come from the regents. Satisfaction with both the men and the work was publicly expressed by various members. A few charges from outside had been considered, and most of them judged

unfounded. Every department of the college was brought into close scrutiny, all accounts being audited in itemized bills, and no purchase, outside of ordinary current expenses, being made without direct authority from the board. At each quarterly meeting, board and faculty held a joint session, in which every teacher presented the condition and needs of his department, with the exact work going forward, and answered freely all questions as to means and methods.

During the campaign of 1896 some feeling was aroused in political circles through an address given by Professor Will upon the Coinage Act of 1873, in which he showed by an elaborate chart the progress of the bill, and by artful insinuations of motive claimed to prove Hon. John Sherman, author of "The Crime." The chart, without insinuations, was printed in the college paper. After the announcement of victory for the fusionists Professor Will publicly challenged several local politicians to a debate of the question, flippantly hinting that they might even secure the aid of Hon. John Sherman himself.

At various times Regent Hoffman was closeted with Professor Will in long conferences, and Mr. Leedy, candidate for governor on the fusion ticket, in a public address, while complimenting the students' Free Silver Club, said that with the present professor of political economy, all would soon be for free silver.

When the campaign was over, threats were frequent from various sources of an entire change in the college. The county and senatorial district had given a republican majority, and leaders blamed the college. Students quoted the son of Regent Hoffman, himself a student, as authority for such rumors. A former regent, seeking endorsement from the county committee of his party for reappointment, was informed that another prominent local politician had been selected, in order that they might "get rid of" certain members of the faculty.

In the legislature of 1897 the needs of the college were treated somewhat grudgingly by committees, and Regent Hoffman, as a member of the legislative committee of the board, urged the keeping of Professor Will in the lobby most



of the winter, where I trusted him fully with all information. Two bills passed in which the form was fixed by Regent Hoffman and Professor Will; one secured a majority of populists upon the board for four years; the other reduced salaries from 10 to 20 per cent., but in such a way as to leave the board much liberty in the distribution. Professor Will was very active in securing the final passage, and immediate publication of the former, and has since explained to me in Mr. Hoffman's presence that he knew a reorganization of the college to be determined upon by the state administration, and that Mr. Hoffman would not accept the task unless the four years of power was assured, while many politicians less able would not shrink even in the two years' lease of power.

The five regents appointed under this law were the two ex-regents who had already given bias to the chair of political economy, a local politician once associated with Mr. Hoffman in the Topolobampo scheme, the wife of Governor John P. St. John, and an ex-congressman. All these were pledged before confirmation to the reorganization planned, and would not have been appointed without such pledge. Of this I am informed by their leader.

At the meeting in April last, after caucus of the new members, while three officers of the board waited, the majority proceeded upon the assumption that the new legislation destroyed the continuity of the board, and undertook a temporary organization, ignoring the fact that my official act as secretary was their reason for being present, and that my office could expire only by election and installation of my successor, as provided by law. The steps of reorganization soon followed. First was a resolution, after defining the term "school year" used in one of the acts of legislature, "that the term of employment of all present employ  s is hereby declared to expire on June 30, 1897." The precedent of thirty years and printed regulations had settled that employ  s "after satisfactory trial, hold their places till resignation or removal for cause, with due notice on either side;" and the action of the board in April 1896 had fixed the

salaries till September 1897. This violent stroke at the continuity of the college, reducing the engagement of professors to the ordinary basis of common schools and ignoring definite contracts, I had opposed, as detrimental to any institution, assuring the board that any teachers who might not be acceptable would doubtless resign if asked. The minority regents also opposed the resolution, and after its passage offered a protest which was denied a record.

It being proposed to defer further action till the summer vacation in June, I, after a night of deliberation, urged immediate action by reappointment of acceptable members; and to relieve any embarrassment on personal accounts declined to be a candidate for the presidency, or to accept reelection if tendered. I was then told that the majority had decided upon action at once, intending to request my withdrawal, but I had anticipated them. Mr. Hoffman was eulogistic upon my management of college matters, saying that they could not expect to find another as able to carry the details of the executive office; but stated that I differed from the board upon fundamental principles of distribution of wealth; that the party had been twitted in the campaign with being the party of the ignorant, and it was time to show the people that leaders in education could be found to sustain the party movement from a state institution.

The work of reorganization was carried on by a committee on which no republican member was named, and every action was settled in caucus before being reported to the board. The election of Professor Will was followed the same day by the selection of eight former teachers "for such positions as the board may hereafter designate," and next day by the naming of seven more "for chairs and positions hereafter designated by the board." Later several subordinates were named. Those selected were invited before the committee to express their acceptance of the places offered, and of the new régime to be inaugurated. One professor and one stenographer declined, and one superintendent has since resigned for reasons connected with the reorganization.

The others, though almost universally opposed to the action, agreed to attend to duties as usual, and in this I encouraged them.

The result is that twelve of the twenty-four teachers and ten of the sixteen subordinates are retained. Most of the older members of the faculty are dismissed, the average term of the twelve leaving being eleven and one-half years and of the twelve remaining eight and one-half years. This may be accounted for by the part taken by most of the older teachers in sustaining the stability of the course of study.

The great body of alumni, incensed at the violence to their alma mater passed resolutions of disapproval. But the board by resolution on their minutes called the annual meeting of alumni, three hundred strong, "a body of republicans met for purely political purposes." Yet numerous populists voted for the resolutions of disapproval, very few against them, and some of the resolutions were written by populists. These resolutions are as follows :

*Resolved*, That we, the alumni of the Kansas State Agricultural College, today assembled at our old home, express our pride at the growth and greatness of our alma mater. Whatever may be our fears, our hopes, our individual opinions, we are proud of its past history and its present high place in the company of like institutions. We honor and revere the names of the men who have been inseparably connected with its growth and development. The honor brought to the institution by reason of its competent president and faculty, we feel to be an honor to us individually, for which we are profoundly grateful to our friends, the faculty.

*Resolved*, That we view the recent action of the board of regents, in dismissing the president and members of the faculty with regret, with sorrow, with indignation, and express for the act our unqualified condemnation. We regret that any attempt should be made from any source to belittle or besmirch the character of the president or any member of the faculty, and we pledge ourselves to defend their honor and good names as loyally as we would defend the honor of our own homes and families.

*Resolved*, The policy of the institution, heretofore maintained, has been one that adhered strictly to the legitimate function of training its students for the shop, the farm, and the home, as well as for the advancement of science and agriculture, and carefully avoided giving any attention to political prob-

lems that lie wholly without the province of such institutions; and by the unusual proceedings of the recent legislature and the present board of regents this policy has been overthrown, officers and employ  s of admitted efficiency have been dismissed, and a policy has been mapped out which makes party fealty the primary test for purely educational and scientific positions. We recognize in this change of policy a dangerous precedent, and pledge ourselves to labor by all honorable means for the divorcement of our state institutions from political influence and control. We regret the disastrous effects that must necessarily result in the experiment station connected with the college from the unavoidable break in the continuity of the series of experiments now under way.

*Resolved*, That we again urge with added emphasis the appointment of one or more members of the alumni to the board of regents. For the retiring members of the faculty, we express the hope that their lines may fall in pleasant places where their good qualities may continue to exert an influence in the enlightenment and upbuilding of such as we. For our alma mater, we will labor as we have done in the past, that its influence for good may bless many more of the young men and young women of the great state of Kansas.

*Resolved*, That the president of this association be directed to appoint a committee of five alumni to devise a plan to secure the appointment in the future of regents of the college, in such manner and by such authorities that political considerations shall have the minimum possible influence in determining the policy of the college and the personnel of the faculty.

*Resolved*, That the committee thus created be directed to present such plan with recommendations at the next annual meeting of this association, and that they be authorized to publish their plans at any time previous to such meeting if they see fit.

Up to this time little had been said as to other than political reasons for any action of the board. A few counter charges of political partisanship against myself were offered by local politicians, but were so utterly unsupported as to strike back. A single professor who insisted that a statement of cause for dismissal was due, received from Regent Hoffman notice that he was "discharged for general inefficiency" and a minute to that effect was afterward entered upon the records, though the salary of this professor alone had been increased, with Mr. Hoffman's approval in committee, one year before.

The payment of salaries to September 1, as contracted, was

demanding by the outgoing employés, and after a delay of two months conceded. But about the middle of July three regents in session without a quorum, issued in the name of the board a statement of reasons, attacking most libelously the entire past management of the institution. The charges were published without a single inquiry, and without the knowledge of at least three members of the board, while every one of them is abundantly disproved by the official records. Charges of incapacity, of neglect of duty, and of unfair distribution of responsibility, rest upon the clearest misrepresentation of facts. Lack of special preparation is contradicted by the fact that all were experienced teachers whose success in specialties had brought their repute. If the lack of high-sounding degrees from eastern universities is ground for such a charge it may be noted that the most of those who lacked the stamp of extended college training are retained, while of the twelve newly elected members, few, if any, have yet gained repute by teaching. Were this the proper place, I should like to show the individual training and experience of the retiring faculty, several of whom are widely known; but it is unnecessary.

I am glad to know that not one of the retained faculty, aside from Professor Will, sympathizes with the statement; and I am confident that not one of nearly forty regents, of all parties, associated with me in the past eighteen years believes it.

The fanatical spirit of the attack was carried out in printing the catalogue of officers and students for 1896-7 without the officers of that year, and later offering correction by a loose sheet.

The bias of the new course of study is shown by introduction of additional required work in economic science at the expense of mineralogy, zoölogy, physiology, psychology, and logic, while industrial training in agriculture and horticulture and all agricultural study after the second year are made optional. Of the new faculty four are notable contributors to the *Arena* and the *New Time*. The college weekly *Industrialist* is already recognized as a party organ.

To sum up, the partisan and fanatical spirit of the attack is shown by persistent effort of mere politicians to turn economic science into a party tool ; by manipulation of party leaders to capture not only this, but other state institutions ; by partisan methods in reorganization ; by treatment accorded the displaced faculty, as to standing contracts ; by cunning misrepresentation of the college's past record ; by the trend of its new course of study ; by the acknowledged attitude toward existing institutions of those who are managing the matter ; and by the reputé of a few chosen standard bearers in the new faculty. It is not strange that the partisan press have taken up the controversy in such a way as to perpetuate the evils of partisanship, whichever party wins. I tremble for the future of state educational institutions. Perhaps, however, it may be left for Kansas to furnish the one example which will deter other boards from attempting to make colleges and universities the football of politics. If by any means the management of state institutions can be brought under rules of civil service, excluding partisan contrivance, the cause of truth and true education will be served.

GEO. T. FAIRCHILD.